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SUBJECT: EUR DAS BRYZA'S JANUARY 15 MEETING WITH ARMENIAN PM SARGSIAN

Classified By: EUR Acting A/S Kurt Volker for Reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: EUR DAS Matt Bryza met on January 15 with Armenian Prime Minister Serzh Sargsian on the margins of a visit by the Minsk Group Co-Chairs to Yerevan, Baku, and Nagorno-Karabakh. DAS Bryza raised the issue of Armenia's relations with Turkey, noting that the Turkish government was serious about pursuing a breakthrough. Sargsian told Bryza that Armenia was interested in reaching a package deal with Turkey to open the border and restore diplomatic relations in return for Armenia's recognizing its border with Turkey and agreeing to convene a historical commission. Sargsian asked Bryza for his assessment of the recent presidential elections in Georgia as well as of Armenia's current presidential election campaign. Bryza told Sargsian the U.S. had concluded Georgian presidential elections were in essence democratic, were free from serious fraud that could have affected the election's results. Bryza added that Armenia's next president would greatly benefit from having international monitors who could assess whether the election process meets international standards. Sargsian agreed, and noted his personal political strength would depend to a certain extent on whether elections were seen to be free and fair. End Summary.

Relations with Turkey

¶2. (C) DAS Bryza briefed Prime Minister Sargsian on Turkish President Gul's visit to Washington and noted that the U.S.-Turkey relationship had risen to a new level thanks to U.S. cooperation with the GOT against PKK terrorism. Bryza explained that with concrete action now being taken against the PKK, the GOT now felt some political breathing space to improve relations with Armenia. Bryza cited discussions with top Turkish officials during President Gul's recent visit to Washington in which the Turkish side stated it was in a constructive mood, and did not wish to miss this historic opportunity, to normalize relations with Armenia. Bryza and Sargsian agreed ongoing, quiet discussions between Turkey and Armenia were proving useful. Sargsian indicated the GOAM was interested in reaching a package deal with Turkey involving Turkey's opening of the border and re-establishment of diplomatic relations in exchange for Armenia recognizing its border with Turkey and agreeing to convene the historical commission.

Elections in Georgia and Armenia

¶3. (C) Sargsian turned to the impending inauguration of Georgian President-elect Saakashvili and asked Bryza about his assessment of the Georgian elections. Bryza told Sargsian that the USG had been cautious in its public assessment of the elections and had waited for President Bush to congratulate Saakashvili until the U.S. Embassy's 20 observer teams had completed their assessment of allegations of serious election fraud and concluded irregularities had not altered the outcome of the election. Sargsian then asked DAS Bryza how Armenia was faring in its preparations for presidential elections on February 19. Bryza responded that Armenia seemed to be on track so far for an improved election, though it would be important to take seriously the recommendations and observations of the OSCE-ODIHR monitoring teams. Sargsian agreed, and noted that he understood it was in his personal interest to ensure the elections were free and fair. Absent such a strong mandate, Sargsian noted he would lack legitimacy and be unable to advance a Nagorno-Karabakh settlement or his other goals in foreign and domestic policy.

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